




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR PUMICESTONE

Record of Proceedings, 12 June 2025

HEALTH LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Miss DOOLAN** (Pumicestone—LNP) (4.09 pm): I rise to speak in support of the Health Legislation Amendment Bill 2025, which delivers on our commitments to strengthen public health protection, improve system accountability and bring frontline clinical voices back into decision-making. The Crisafulli government was elected with a clear mandate: to rebuild confidence in our health system and to take action where the former Labor government failed to deliver. This bill does exactly that. It delivers two critical reforms. First, it ensures that clinicians—real frontline health professionals—have a seat at the table on every hospital and health board in Queensland. Second, it enhances Queensland Health's ability to enforce the law against the illegal tobacco and vaping market, which exploded under Labor's watch and continues to harm our young people and undermine decades of public health progress.

I will begin with the reforms to the Hospital and Health Boards Act. Every day, thousands of doctors, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals deliver life-saving care to Queenslanders. Those are the people who know what works and what does not. However, until now, they have had limited input into how our health services are governed. That ends with this bill. We are fulfilling our election commitment to require every hospital and health board to include at least one practising clinician. That must be someone with direct patient experience, not someone working in policy or administration but in the wards and clinics, doing the work. To qualify, the clinician must be a registered health practitioner, have worked in the health service for at least two years and be currently providing at least eight hours of patient care per week within that hospital and health service.

This is not symbolic; it is a deliberate, meaningful step to embed frontline experience into board-level decision-making, to give those who live the system a voice in shaping it. These changes will take effect from 1 April 2026, aligning with the expiry of many current board appointments and giving Queensland Health time to properly recruit, vet and appoint qualified clinicians.

Some members opposite may raise the issue of conflicts of interest. I say this plainly: we have addressed that. Under the bill, clinician board members cannot be appointed chair or deputy chair, which is a clear mechanism to manage any perceived or actual conflicts. The Queensland Integrity Commissioner reviewed the proposal and confirmed that no further amendments were required, stating that the existing statutory requirements for disclosure and management of conflicts are adequate. Let us not forget Labor themselves appointed five current board members who are also working clinicians. Any conflicts there are being appropriately managed. This government is not just allowing it; we are embedding it into law and ensuring every health service benefits from frontline insight.

I turn to the second half of the bill and our decisive action to crack down on the illicit vape and tobacco trade. Under the former government, the number of illegal stores selling vapes and tobacco skyrocketed and they often operate in broad daylight with little consequence. From 2017 to 2023, while Labor looked the other way, the rate of vaping among high school students tripled. According to the

Cancer Council Queensland, young people who vape are 29 times more likely to go on to smoke cigarettes. We are now dealing with the consequences of Labor's inaction and this bill gives us stronger powers to fix it.

Since taking office, the Crisafulli government has seized more than 250,000 vapes and led Operation Appaloosa, resulting in the largest seizure of its kind in Australia. That one operation alone netted 76,000 vapes, 19 million illicit cigarettes and 3.6 tonnes of loose tobacco, worth over \$20.8 million. However, with success comes new challenges. Right now, seized vapes must be stored for at least eight weeks due to current forfeiture and appeal processes. That means we are holding onto flammable, toxic products at high cost and risk. This bill introduces the power for immediate forfeiture, allowing Queensland Health to destroy seized vapes without delay, protecting both public safety and the environment.

The bill also introduces a new court ordered cost recovery mechanism. If you profit from selling illegal vapes, tobacco or ice pipes then you will now be liable for the full cost of enforcement. That includes seizure, storage, investigation and prosecution. The message is clear: if you do the crime then you pay the price. We have already backed this with tough penalties. As of April this year, fines for the commercial supply of illicit tobacco or vapes sit at \$32,260 for individuals and \$161,300 for corporations, which are the toughest penalties in the nation. In the first week after these fines were introduced, illegal operators were hit with \$5 million in penalties, which is 20 times more than Labor was issuing weekly. We also used the State Penalties Enforcement Registry to seize nearly half a million dollars in cash and assets from illegal traders. That is not just enforcement; it is a whole-of-government approach to stop organised crime and protect our children. Let me be very clear: vaping is not safe, it is not harmless and it is not welcome in Queensland schools, shops or streets. This bill gives us stronger powers to act faster, hold offenders accountable and dismantle the criminal networks profiting from addiction.

In conclusion, this is a bill that reflects the Crisafulli government's priorities: public health, system integrity, frontline trust and community safety. We are putting clinicians back at the heart of hospital decision-making. We are cleaning up the mess Labor left behind on vaping. We are making Queensland safer and healthier. I commend the bill to the House.